

Message Text

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SUBJ: COALITION GOVT SURVIVES LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: MODERATE WING OF LABOR PARTY, WHICH INCLUDES PARTY'S MINISTERS, DOMINATED A FREE-SWINGING ANNUAL CONFERENCE. THIS REDUCES CHANCES THAT LABOR AS A PARTY WILL SPLIT FROM GOVERNING COALITION (ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL SIGNIFICANT FRICTION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF CABINET). JUSTIN KEATING'S PERFORMANCE AT CONFERENCE INCREASED HIS CHANCES OF GETTING EVENTUAL PARTY LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY

1. IRISH LABOR PARTY HELD ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 19/20. LABOR PARTY MINISTERS IN GOVT COALITION ATTENDED WITH SOME TREPIDATION, SINCE LABOR IS ONLY IRISH PARTY WHICH TRADITIONALLY HOLDS A CONFERENCE OPEN TO REAL DEBATE. PARTY ALSO HAS A VERY ACTIVE LEFT WING WHICH OBJECTS TO PARTICIPATION IN A GOVERNMENT DOMINATED BY THE MORE CONSERVATIVE FINE GAEL PARTY. AN ADDITIONAL PROBLEM THIS YEAR WAS THAT GOI HAD BEEN INERT ON REFORM PROGRAMS, LEAVING LABOR MINISTERS OPEN TO ACCUSATIONS THAT THEY WERE SELLING THEIR PRINCIPLES IN ORDER TO REMAIN IN POWER.

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WM WHILE SUCH CHARGES WERE MADE FORCEFULLY FROM THE FLOOR, MINISTERS SURVIVED THEM EASILY. CONSENSUS OF CONFERENCE WAS THAT GOVERNMENT MUST MOVE FASTER TOWARD SOCIAL CHANGE, BUT THAT LABOR SHOULD EXERT ITS INFLUENCE FROM THE INSIDE GOVT RATHER THAN THE OUTSIDE. IF GOVT'S RECORD DOES NOT IMPROVE, A SPECIAL CONFERENCE MAY BE HELD LATER TO DECIDE ON NEW STEPS. THIS, HOWEVER, SHOULD MERELY INCREASE LABOR MINISTERS' LEVERAGE WITHIN GOVERNING COALITION.

3. IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH CLEAR PECKING ORDER FOR LEADING PERSONALITIES ON BASIS OF APPLAUSE OR BOOS FROM THE FLOOR. PARTY LEADER BRENDAN CORISH WAS AT THE TOP, EVEN THOUGH HIS SPEECH CONTAINED A GLOOMY DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION AND A PLEA FOR MODERATION IN WAGE DEMANDS. NEXT IN ORDER OF POPULARITY WAS JUSTIN KEATING, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, WHO STRONGLY DEFENDED COALITION GOVERNMENT ON BASIS THAT ONLY ALTERNATIVE WAS MUCH WORSE: CONTINUED DOMINATION OF COUNTRY BY FIANNA FAIL (NOW MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY). KEATING'S OTHER MAJOR POINT WAS THAT HE WAS DOING HIS BEST TO GET BENEFITS FOR IRISH PEOPLE FROM THE CANADIAN-OWNED TARA LEAD"ZINC MINE. HE ARGUED THAT, AS A COMMITTED SOCIALIST, HE WOULD PREFER OUTRIGHT NATIONALIZATION, BUT LABOR SIMPLY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH VOTES FOR IT IN DAIL.

4. CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN (MINISTER OF POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS) WAS ALSO A SUCCESS. HIS SPEECH ON NORTHERN IRELAND WAS WARMY APPLAUDED, AND HE SUCCEEDED IN PASSING A RESOLUTION THAT CONDEMNED NOT ONLY INTERNMENT BUT ALSO THE PROVISIONAL IRA, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS BOTH A CAUSE OF INTERNMENT AND THE MAJOR BENEFICIARY FROM IT.

5. OTHER LABOR MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS WERE ALSO POPULAR WITH THE FLOOR. PARTY LEFT-WINGERS, HOWEVER, INCLUDING SENATOR NOEL BROWNE, WERE APPLAUDED BY PART OF CONVENTION AND BOOED BY ANOTHER PART.

6. VILLIAN OF CONFERENCE WAS EDUCATION MINISTER BURKE -- A SOFT TARGET WHO IS NOT A MEMBER OF PARTY AND WAS NOT PRESENT. SEVERAL MOTIONS CONDEMNED HIS POLICIES, GENERALLY ON BASIS THAT THEY FAVORED RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AT EXPENSE OF NON-SECTARIAN EDUCATION.

7. REAL TARGET OF THE ANTI-BURKE SPEECHES, HOWEVER, WAS THE CON-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SERVATIVE VOTING RECORD THAT HE SHARES WITH PM COSGRAVE. (LABOR ESPECIALLY RESENTS THE VOTE OF COSGRAVE AND BURKE AGAINST THEIR OWN GOVT'S BILL TO LEGALIZE CONTRACEPTIVES.) NO LABOR MINISTERS SPOKE IN DEFENSE OF BURKE, AS THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN OBLIGED TO DO IF COSGRAVE HAD BEEN DIRECTLY ATTACKED.

8. COMMENT: CONFERENCE APPEARS TO HAVE HAD TWO MAJOR EFFECTS. FIRST, MODERATE WING HAS CLEARLY ASSERTED CONTROL OF PARTY. THIS

REDUCES CHANCES OF LABOR PARTY SPLIT WITH FINE GAEL. THERE APPEARS TO BE MUCH FRICTION IN CABINET, BUT IT IS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND NOT ALONG PARTY LINES. REFORMIST WING OF FINE GAEL PROBABLY AGREES WITH LABOR ON MOST POINTS.

9. SECOND, KEATING IS IN GOOD POSITION TO SUCCEED BRENDAN CORISH IF LATTER RETIRES AS PARTY LEADER. KEATING'S VIEWS IN CONFERENCE PUT HIM IN PARTY'S MODERATE, PRAGMATIC WING, DESPITE HIS ASSERTION OF COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM.
MOORE

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